

Some of the Painters Show Improvement in Their Work—Portrait of His Mother by George Bellows Better Than Previous One.

By HENRY M'BRIDE.

THE New Society of Artists continues to make Academicism easier to bear by including a *souper* of modernity in its exhibitions, and the present one, just opened in the galleries of Wildenstein & Co., steers about as deftly between the devil and the deep sea as its two predecessors did. It is very like its two predecessors.

There is a blackish portrait of his mother by George Bellows, a trifle better than his previous blackish portrait of his mother, and there is a Renoirish "Child in Chinese Dress," by Glackens, a trifle more Renoirish than the last Renoirish effort he exhibited. There is a "Young Girl's Portrait," by Eugene Speicher, that is much better than his usual, and a figure piece by George Luks that is much worse than his usual. So it goes through the list. An even balance is maintained, and the sum total is the same.

The situation might be sufficiently indicated for those who already know the New Society well by saying that these men, Eugene Speicher, Samuel Halpert, Rockwell Kent, Jerome Myers, Guy Pene du Bois and James Earle Fraser, improve somewhat upon past performances, and that these men, George Luks, W. J. Glackens, John Sloan, Robert Henri and Robert Chanler, distinctly do not.

There is no new note sounded. No picture with a message. Nothing that the average New Yorker writing to his cousin in the country could particularly dilate upon. Visitors to the show will not come down from the rooms and venture out upon the avenue in a rapt, ecstatic state and get run over by motor cars. Visitors, in fact, will come down quite calmly and possibly venture into Hick's for an ice cream soda, just as though nothing had happened. Perhaps nothing had.

But this is not particularly the occasion for measuring the New Society. If it doesn't branch out it, nevertheless, holds its own, which is something. It includes the liveliest of those who are permitted to exhibit on Fifty-seventh street among its members and holds a door part way open for a few modernists, such as Henry McFee and Gaston Lachaise. So as a liberality of opinion appeals to me, especially as coming from the artists who might be called institutional, I welcome even homeopathic doses of it. I am optimistic, in fact, about the New Society and trust it will persist.

In default of a general theme, I append a few remarks about the principal contributions.

"Portrait of My Mother," by George Bellows. No one can withhold sympathy from this artist's evident wish to devote the highest that is within him to the perfecting of a durable monument to his mother. He has tried this portrait several times, and this is the best of the series to date. No one can withhold respect either for the ambition that is back of the picture. Mr. Bellows aims to paint in the grand style. Almost more than any of our men, he puts passion into his work and any amount of muscular energy.

There is so much that's effeminate in the American school of painting that the mere manliness of Mr. Bellows's style is enough in itself to distinguish him. So far so good.

Admiration for ambition and courage in a time when both qualities seem somewhat scarce need not lead us into confusing ambition with achievement. The fact is that this artist has not yet overcome the serious handicaps with which he started out. He paints more and more as he gets older in a manner that calls aloud for a precision in draughtsmanship to which he is not equal. He improves in drawing and it must be apparent to any one that he takes great pains with his drawing, but the early deficiencies in his training now have to be severely paid for. At an age when drawing should be an unconscious but sure prop to his brush he has to grope every inch of the way—and the spectator is uneasily aware of it.

Compare a photograph of this portrait with a photograph of a Courbet or a good Ingres and see the difference. There is no flinching in an Ingres. The thing that strikes straight forwardly to say what the artist had in mind in the beginning, and it is only afterward that the student thinks of the drawing.

In the Bellows portrait the hands and arms were evidently a trouble to the artist to place. One feels instinctively the artist yawning them backward and forward uncertainly, and finally and in spite of the Hambridge theory saying to himself, "Hang it, I'll let 'em go like that." Drawing, however, is merely an intellectual attribute to expression, and I see no reason why Bellows should not attain at least enough of it to make it drop out of sight in a discussion of his work. As to his color I am less hopeful. Color seems to be more a matter of temperament than of brains, and I never heard of any one who improved his color sense by taking counsel. Even in color, however, the present portrait is better than most of its recent predecessors, simply because the color in it has been reduced to the minimum, the blacks doing most of the work. Technically some of the best work is in the accessories, the reflected objects seen in the mirror being especially clever.

"Young Girl's Portrait," by Eugene Speicher. Mr. Speicher is not so dynamic as Mr. Bellows, and I fear not so earnest. Therefore he shall not be subjected to so severe a criticism. He shall not be compared with Courbet and Ingres. He will be compared only with himself. In that test he comes off with flying colors, for in the present portrait he is better than he used to be. In fact, as a portraitist he begins to be somebody.

The figure of the young girl has been nicely placed, the color is agreeable and the painting is sufficiently broad. The only drawback is the slight hardness or touch of self-consciousness, or something, that got into the face and hands. Mr. Speicher used to affect cheeks on young girls that had an apple-red showiness and glitter—a trick he got from Renoir. He has not quite yet got rid of this tendency.

"Portrait Study" and "Virginia," by Jerome Myers. Exceedingly commendable work. The first of these is a self portrait. Mr. Myers has done in his time almost as many self portraits as Rembrandt, and like the early master too, does some of his best painting when posing for himself. The present study has something in it which for want of a better word may be called "German," but it has class just the same. The portrait of the artist's daughter Virginia is thoroughly charming.

"Portrait of C. H. Chavart," by Edmond Quinn. A first rate head in bronze. Full of expression and character.

"The Joy of Living," by George Luks. A deplorable figure study; a hollow echo of this artist's earlier successes.

"Landscape," by Samuel Halpert. The best landscape this painter has exhibited for some time. It is bold and



PEASANT GIRL  
By W. LEE HANKEY SHOWN AT THE JOHN LEVY GALLERIES

grace, or the "Blue Boy." And the guessing is absurdly easy. Even the present writer—and critics, they all say, know nothing about art—even the present writer guessed twenty of the names right off the bat. Think how easy it will be for you to do.

A word of caution, however, is perhaps necessary. You may profit by my experience. I made one dreadful error. I pounced upon a delightful little picture and I said to myself, says I, "Ah, ha, that's a Degas!" But it wasn't a Degas at all. It was by an American who paints just like Degas! So take warning by this experience of mine, and in making out your lists remember that there are no pictures by Renoir, Forain, Manet or Degas in the room, although at first glance you might think there are.

"November," by Rockwell Kent. A decorative landscape, with some stages in front leaping from hill to hill, in Mr. Kent's usual largish style. The thing is so decorative that it might almost be straightaway called an overmantel.

"New York Oriental," by Guy Pene du Bois. A young woman leaning against an iron railing before a downtown house. She has been vigorously and strongly put upon canvas and one long more than ever for the "legend" that Mr. du Bois's pictures call for, but which he ruthlessly withholds.

"Helen's Head," by Stirling Calder. Full of the decision and tricky effect that one expects in Mr. Calder's sculpture. There is, however, a certain pleasure to be obtained from the carvings of an artist who never allows his ideal to carry him beyond his powers of execution.

Furthermore, his color is as bold and



"HELEN"  
By STIRLING CALDER,  
NEW SOCIETY OF ARTISTS  
WILDENSTEIN GALLERIES.

free as his manner. It is, indeed, very astonishing to think of his history and then look at his work.

Mr. Hankey was a prolific and popular etcher. There had been no sign that he had reached the apex of his career in that line, so it may be assumed that he will continue to etch, and like Zorn, have two careers instead of one.

He found the subjects for his oils on the Continent. There is a "Spanish Wind" with a dashing young woman seated before it, clad in colors that only a colorist would attempt; a "Dressing Table" scene, which is a masterpiece of impressionism; a mother and child group in which the melting eyes of the child are most appealing; various clever landscapes and street scenes; and a conscientious and thoroughly characteristic study of an old Piarist peasant woman. In all these the color is lively and truly Continental, but there is something in the square brush strokes that betrays Mr. Hankey's British origin.

Notes and Activities

In the World of Art  
The Nansen group of painters and sculptors, who work in the country adjacent to the Tappan Zee on the west bank of the Hudson, are exhibiting in the Babcock Galleries. The one generalization that may be made for this group of painters is that they all exhibit the regular American tendency toward pleasant color. The word "pleasant" is chosen advisedly, since it does not mean one to serious comparisons. Few Americans positively offend in color, but then on the other hand it must be remembered that some men can get more fame by offending with color than others with being just good.

The main thing, you know, is to stand out.

The Nansen group consists of the following: John E. Cooligan, Sara Hess, Daniel Ketz, Frances Ketter, C. A. Burlingame, Marjorie J. Tompkins, Albert Inley, Frances C. C. Coan, W. H. Donnelly, Otilia Serrell, T. B. King, Walter Bollenstein, C. J. Coan, Kunie Ando, C. A. Heber and Ida Costigan.

The Arts Guild is showing the sculptures of Ernesto Bagni del Piaton and some decorative paintings by Bolin, Mr. del Piaton, who has had great success

making portraits in Cuba, also has had some New York alters, among them Gen. O'Ryan. It must be confessed that this portrait of Gen. O'Ryan is not so happy as the same sculptor's portraits of the Cuban presidents and generals. He has succeeded, however, in apprehending other American types very well.

Mr. Bolin's pictures of the dance are the best things he does. He is enamored of the Ballet Russe type of dancing and manages to get both the drama and the grace of the movement, choosing generally the moment when all the stage is darkened and the two leading dancers are picked out by the man on high with the spotlight.

A set of thirty-two drawings by Elia Nadelman, the sculptor, have been carefully reproduced in Paris and are now published in book form in New York. As a foreword Mr. Nadelman makes this confident statement:

"These drawings, made sixteen years ago, have completely revolutionized the art of our time. They introduced into painting and sculpture abstract forms, until then wholly lacking. Cubism was only an imitation of the abstract forms of these drawings and did not attain their plastic significance. In the future, painting will continue and will be felt more profoundly in the art of the future."

The volume bears the title, "Vers la Beauté."

Rubin and Kolnik, the two Rumanians who are exhibiting at the Anderson Galleries, are young men who have not yet got over the shock of seeing the works of Hodler, the Swiss painter, for the first time. They have painted pictures born of the sympathy with suffering humanity engendered in them by the war; but they painted their pictures far too quickly. Their idol, Hodler, would not have painted so many in so short a time.

They are both intense and mystical. Words attributed to them in the catalogue vividly portray the present state of these young men's minds:

"I do not like this city; one never sees the sky. I will go to India, Japan, as soon as I sell these canvases." Then he said, with compressed violence: "I will not think of the world. What if I do not exhibit for twenty-five years. It is the only thing to do. One must not think of the public. The only life for the artist is solitude, work, creation, alone and separate."

We stood now before a composition of five figures, "The Temptation in the Desert." This canvas seemed to me to be Rubin's masterpiece. In this he had achieved an amazing relation of abstract forms.

"That figure in the middle," he said, "is myself. It has the face of my brother, who was killed in the war. I saw him on his deathbed, and his head lay in many of my canvases. But it is myself there." His voice became fervent. "It is a resisting temptation, continuing on my way of suffering in spite of the hands that reach out to grasp me. You see" (he pointed to the figure of the woman seeking the robe of the emaciated ascetic), "she is trying to hold me back, but I am going on. I shall go on!"

What American artist will paint the most notable marine in 1922? All who are interested in the United States Junior Naval Reserve's patriotic and altruistic task of creating sea imagination will learn interesting particulars by communicating with Edward A. Oldham, the executive secretary of the Reserve at 2180 Broadway. For the last four years Mr. Oldham has been industriously engaged in press agenting the sea, with the purpose in view of reviving in the American mind the old love of things maritime that once made America the "mistress of the seas." It has been a matter of interesting comment on the growing frequency of marine covers on magazines, boat and sea illustrations in the copy of national advertisers, and maritime titles of hotels and restaurants.

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YOUNG GIRLS PORTRAIT  
By EUGENE SPEICHER, NEW SOCIETY OF ARTISTS,  
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Mr. Oldham's interesting activities also have led to the manufacture of more toys that snatched of the sea and sea suggesting apparel of American children. He now plans an interesting contest among painters of marine subjects, which is sure to bring forth increased interest in America's growing sea spirit.

Francis Gos, the Swiss artist whose water color landscapes, chiefly pictures of the Alps, are on exhibition this week at the Civic Club, is a modern painter who has won much recognition in the art centers of Europe. He has exhibited in England, Holland, Belgium, Italy, as well as in Switzerland.

He has a studio in Geneva and another, a chalet, in Zermatt, at the foot of Gonergrat, the famous Alpine range. The most interesting mountain pictures were painted in the Zermatt valley. To the lover of Alpine splendor the colors, the sturdy splendor and the majestic beauty of the Alps will enchant the observer as he recognizes the Matterhorn, the Rimpfischhorn, the Weisshorn, the Strahhorn and other famous peaks.

The hardness, vitality and freedom of the Swiss and his overwhelming love and appreciation of his home in the snowfields stand out boldly in the brilliant splendor rendered of vast glaciers and seas of ice sparkling under the full sunlight as they loom against the deep blue of Alpine skies. The thrill of the stupendous panorama from the Gonergrat, the tower peaks of the mighty Matterhorn, that has sent many a courageous climber down its icy crags to a terrible fate, are portrayed by a native who has spent his life among them, living on the very glaciers sometimes for months, climbing down to the villages but once a week for his supply of goat milk and cheese. One painting

is a crude wooden cross familiar to travelers, which marks the spot where all too frequent one of these hapless climbers.

The exhibit includes landscapes from the shores of Swiss and Italian lakes, scenes from Holland and Belgium and some figures and studies which are extremely well painted. They are distinct in modern treatment. Some of the peaks might be called Cubist in interpretation.

Besides distinctive color harmony, he shows within small areas an appreciation of spaces and rhythmically arranged forms. His refinement of execution does not preclude a sense of largeness in these little-sketch figures, child-like figures, well defined but which continue into space. In other of these small circular monotypes longer and plimmer draped figures move with arms gracefully outstretched, sensitively indicated and with action. These glide through vaporous greens, browns and reds—sensitive in color with subtle gradation. But in spite of the fusion of color and the vagueness of outline of these atmospheric masses, there is volume and definition form in clouds as well as figures.

Raymond Weyer piques curiosity by what he writes of the work of Henry A. Wight, whose monotypes are being shown this week in the Ehrlich Galleries. He says:

"When a man begins to draw or paint without previous training or hint of any particular interest in art, after following a business career for many years, one is inclined to believe that real genius is asserting itself. It is easy to indulge in exaggerations in such a case, to prophesy a future for the artist and assign qualities which he does not possess. It is not my intention to do this. I am interested in this collection of paintings and monotypes because it represents the work of a man who, after considerable activity and success in a purely business field, began to paint without warning or training, and because his imagination so far has been such as to enable him to rise superior to his lack of training."

At present Henry Wight is remarkably interesting in his emotional reaction and refinement of expression. No art could be more the outcome of natural impulse than his. And this impulse is aesthetic. Although Henry Wight's imagination has a mystical side, it is supplementary, and has nothing to do with the cause of his painting, which possesses in common with all true art an emotional and aesthetic foundation.

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